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*The Population of China. A Letter addressed to the Registrar-General, London.* By SIR JOHN BOWRING.\*

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, HONGKONG,  
13th July, 1855.

SIR,

I WISH it were possible to give a satisfactory reply to your inquiries as to the real population of China.

There has been no official census taken place since the time of Kia King, 43 years ago. Much doubt has been thrown upon the accuracy of these returns, which gave 362,447,183 as the total number of the inhabitants of China. I think our greater knowledge of the country increases the evidence in favour of the approximate correctness of the official document, and that we may with tolerable safety estimate the present population of the Chinese empire as between 350,000,000 and 400,000,000 of human beings. The penal laws of China make provision for a general system of registration; and corporal punishments, generally amounting to 100 blows of the bamboo, are to be inflicted on those who neglect to make the proper returns. The machinery is confided to the elders of the district, and the census is required to be annually taken; but I have no reason to believe that the law is obeyed, or the neglect of it punished.

In the English translation of Father Alvares Semedo's history of China, published in London, A. D. 1655, is the following passage:—

“This kingdom is so exceedingly populous, that having lived there two-and-twenty years, I was in no less amazement at my coming away than in the beginning, at the multitude of the people. Certainly the truth exceedeth all hyperboles, not only in the cities, towns, and public places, but also in the highway there is as great a concourse as is usual in Europe on some great festival. And if we will refer ourselves to the general register book wherein only the common men are enrolled, leaving out women, children, eunuchs, professors of letters and arms, there are reckoned of them to be fifty-eight millions fifty-five thousand one hundred and four score.” The minuteness of the enumeration would seem to show that the father quoted some official document.

I forward herewith two tabular statements which I have copied from Dr. Williams' *Middle Kingdom*, one of the best books on China. The first (No. 1) gives a list of the various estimates from A. D. 1393 to 1812, with the authorities quoted. The second is a re-arranged statement of censuses taken at different periods, (No. 2).

As there are few men in China more diligent or better instructed than Dr. Williams, I thought it desirable to communicate with him in order to ascertain his present views as to the credit which may properly be attached to the official statistics of China. I send a copy of his letter, (No. 3).

I do not know that there is any safer course than to reason from

\* This letter has already been published in the Transactions of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society; but the interest which attaches to the question of the true amount of the population of China seems to justify its republication in these pages. (ED. J. S. S.)

details to generals, from the known to the unknown; and I have taken every opportunity which my intercourse with the Chinese has afforded me, to obtain, if not correct, at least approximative, information as to the true statistics of the country. It may be affirmed without any hesitation, that as regards the Five Ports and the adjacent districts, to which we have access, the population is so numerous as to furnish arguments that the number of inhabitants of the entire Empire is very much greater than is represented by the official returns. These localities cannot be taken as fair averages; for, naturally enough, increased commercial activity has brought with it a flow of new settlers, and there can be no doubt that some of the ancient seats of commerce have lost much of their population in losing their trade; but whether all the causes of decline in particular spots have much counteracted the fecundity of the Chinese races considered as a whole, may well be questioned.

Some years ago I had an opportunity of discussing the subject of Chinese population with the mandarin at Ningpo, who was charged with making the returns for that district. Ningpo can scarcely be called a progressive place—it is decidedly the least so of the Five Treaty Ports; but I found, generally speaking, that the real returns were considerably in excess of the official estimates.

And I would remark, that, in taking the area of the eighteen provinces of China at 1,348,870 square miles, the census of 1812 would give 268 persons to a square mile, which is considerably less than the population of the densely peopled countries of Europe.

According to ancient usage, the population in China is grouped under four heads,—1, Scholars; 2, Husbandmen; 3, Mechanics; 4, Merchants. There is a numerous class who are considered almost as social outcasts, such as Stage-players—professional Gamblers—Beggars—Convicts—Outlaws, and others; and these probably form no part of the population returns. In the more remote rural districts, on the other hand, the returning officer most probably contents himself with giving the average of more accessible and better-peopled localities.

I have no means of obtaining any satisfactory tables to show the proportions which different ages bear to one another in China, or the average mortality at different periods of human life; yet to every decade of life the Chinese apply some special designation:—the age of 10 is called “the Opening Degree;” 20, “Youth expired;” 30, “Strength and Marriage;” 40, “Officially Apt;” 50, “Error knowing;” 60, “Cycle Closing;” 70, “Rare Bird of Age;” 80, “Rusty visaged;” 90, “Delayed;” 100, “Age’s Extremity.” Among the Chinese the amount of reverence grows with the number of years. I made, some years ago, the acquaintance of a Buddhist priest living in the convent of Tien Tung near Ningpo, who was more than a century old, and whom people of rank were in the habit of visiting in order to show their respect and to obtain his autograph. He had the civility to give me a very fair specimen of his handwriting. There are not only many establishments for the reception of the aged, but the penal code provides severe punishments for those who refuse to relieve the poor in their declining years. Age may also be pleaded in extenuation of crime, and in mitigation of punishment. Imperial

decrees sometimes order presents to be given to all indigent old people in the empire. I am not aware of any detailed statistics giving the number of such recipients since a return published in the time of Kanghi (1657). Kienlung (1785) directed that all those claimants whose age exceeded 60, should receive 5 bushels of rice and a piece of linen; those above 80, 10 bushels of rice and two pieces of linen; those above 90, 30 bushels of rice and two pieces of common silk; and those above 100, 50 bushels of rice and two pieces, one of fine and one of common silk. He ordered all the elders to be enumerated who were at the head of five generations, of whom there were 192, and, "in gratitude to heaven," summoned 3000 of the oldest men of the empire to receive Imperial presents, which consisted principally of embroidered purses, and badges bearing the character *shau*, meaning *Longevity*.

The Kanghi tables, showing the numbers who enjoyed the benefit of the Edict, are these:—

PROVINCES.	Above 70 Years.	Above 80 Years.	Above 90 Years.	Above 100 Years.	Totals.
Chihle .....	....	11,111	535	....	11,646
Leaoutung .....	244	88	5	....	337
Kansuh .....	41,991	9,043	250	....	51,284
Shantung .....	65,225	26,067	1,330	9	92,631
Honan .....	8,132	3,651	451	5	12,239
Keangnan .....	....	34,088	1,065	3	35,156
Chekeang .....	....	21,866	982	....	22,848
Shanse .....	13,382	11,582	317	....	25,281
Hookwang .....	37,354	25,544	2,850	4	65,752
Keangse .....	....	7,190	580	....	7,770
Kwangtung .....	17,369	9,415	591	....	27,375
Kwangse .....	....	489	114	....	603
Fuhkeen .....	10,213	5,232	369	....	15,814
Szechuen .....	176	99	13	....	288
Kweichow .....	....	749	94	....	843
Yunnan .....	....	3,618	450	....	4,068
	194,086	169,932	9,996	21	373,935

As these returns bear no proportion to the general population of the country, or to the relative extent of the various provinces, many fortuitous and local circumstances must have caused the obvious incongruities. For example: in the adjacent provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangse, in which the whole mass of population is in the proportion of two to one, the recipients are as 46 to 1, and as regards age, while the proportion of those above 80 is represented at 19 to 1, those above 90 are only a little more than 5 to 1. In all these matters the greater or less co-operation of the local authorities is one of the most important elements in producing a result. Kwangse is extremely mountainous, and bordered on the north-west by the country of the Meacou-tsz, or aborigines, the districts adjoining which are but in a half reclaimed state, and governed by officers of a character and denomination distinct from those of the provinces. But it is inexplicable that the province of Pechile, in which Peking is situated, should exhibit so small a proportional return, especially as compared with the adjacent province of Shantung. Hookwang, with a popu-

lation of  $26\frac{1}{4}$  millions, has 37,354 indigent persons above 70, while Szechuen, whose population is  $21\frac{1}{2}$  millions, presents only 176 persons in that category.

I think there is abundant evidence of redundant population pressing more and more heavily upon, and suffering more and more severely from, an inadequate supply of food. Though there are periods when extraordinary harvests enable the Chinese to transport rice, the principal food of the people, from one province to another,—and sometimes even to foreign countries,—yet of late the importations from foreign countries have been enormous, and China has drawn largely on the Straits, the Philippines, Siam, and other places, to fill up a vast deficiency in supply. Famine has, notwithstanding, committed dreadful ravages, and the provisions of the imperial granaries have been wholly inadequate to provide for the public wants. It is true that cultivation has been greatly interfered with by intestinal disorders, and that there has been much destruction by inundations, incendiarism, and other accidental or transitory causes; but without reference to these, I am disposed to believe that there is a greater increase in the numbers of the population than in the home production of food for their use. It must be remembered, too, that while the race is thus augmenting, the causes which lead to the destruction of food,—such as the overflow of rivers, fires, ravages of locusts, bad seasons, and other calamities,—are to a great extent beyond the control of human prudence or human exertion. It would be difficult to show what new element could be introduced which would raise up the native supply of food beyond its present productiveness, considering that hand husbandry has given to cultivation more of a horticultural than an agricultural character.

The constant flow of emigration *from* China, contrasted with the complete absence of emigration *into* China, is striking evidence of the redundancy of the population; for though that emigration is almost wholly confined to two provinces, namely, Kwangtung and Fockien, representing together a population of probably from 34,000,000 to 35,000,000, I am disposed to think that a number nearer 3,000,000 than 2,000,000 from these provinces alone are located in foreign countries. In the kingdom of Siam, it is estimated that there are at least a million and a half of Chinese, of which 200,000 are in the capital (Bangkok). They crowd all the islands of the Indian Archipelago. In Java, we know by a correct census there are 136,000. Cochin China teems with Chinese. In this colony we are seldom, without one, two, or three vessels taking Chinese emigrants to California and other places. Multitudes go to Australia, to the Philippines, to the Sandwich Islands, to the western coast of Central and Southern America; some have made their way to British India. The emigration to the British West Indies has been considerable—to the Havana greater still. The annual arrivals in Singapore are estimated at an average of 10,000, and 2,000 is the number that are said annually to return to China.\*

There is not only this enormous maritime emigration, but a considerable inland efflux of Chinese towards Manchuria and Tibet; and it may be added, that the large and fertile islands of Formosa and Hainan have been to a great extent won from the aborigines by

\* Journal of the Indian Archipelago, vol. ii, p. 286.

successive inroads of Chinese settlers. Now these are all males—there is not a woman to 10,000 men: hence perhaps the small social value of the female infant. Yet this perpetual out-flowing of people seems in no respect to diminish the number of those who are left behind. Few Chinamen leave their country without a fixed purpose to return to worship in the ancestral hall—to bring sacrifices to the tombs of their fathers; but it may be doubted if one in ten revisits his native land. The loss of life from disease—from bad arrangements—from shipwreck—and other casualties, amounts to a frightful percentage on those who emigrate.

The multitudes of persons who live by the fisheries in China afford evidence not only that the land is cultivated to the greatest possible extent, but that it is insufficient to supply the necessities of the overflowing population; for agriculture is held in high honour in China, and the husbandman stands next in rank to the sage or literary man in the social hierarchy. It has been supposed that nearly a tenth of the population derive their means of support from fisheries. Hundreds and thousands of boats crowd the whole coast of China—sometimes acting in communities, sometimes independent and isolated. There is no species of craft by which a fish can be inveigled which is not practised with success in China—every variety of net, from vast seines embracing miles, to the smallest handflet in the care of a child. Fishing by night and fishing by day, fishing in moon-light, by torch-light, and in utter darkness,—fishing in boats of all sizes,—fishing by those who are stationary on the rock by the sea-side, and by those who are absent for weeks on the wildest of seas,—fishing by cormorants,—fishing by divers,—fishing with lines,—with baskets—by every imaginable decoy and device. There is no river which is not staked to assist the fisherman in his craft. There is no lake, no pond, which is not crowded with fish. A piece of water is nearly as valuable as a field of fertile land. At day-break every city is crowded with sellers of live fish, who carry their commodity in buckets of water, saving all they do not sell to be returned to the pond or kept for another day's service. And the lakes and ponds of China not only supply large provisions of fish—they produce considerable quantities of edible roots and seeds which are largely consumed by the people. Among these the esculent arum, the water chestnut (*scirpus tuberosus*), and the lotus (*nelumbium*) are the most remarkable.

The enormous river population of China, who live only in boats—who are born and educated—who marry, rear their families, and die—who, in a word, begin and end their existence on the water, and never have or dream of any shelter other than the roof, and who seldom tread except on the deck or boards of their sampans,—show to what an extent the land is crowded, and how inadequate it is to maintain the cumberers of the soil. In the city of Canton alone it is estimated that 300,000 persons dwell upon the surface of the river: the boats, sometimes twenty or thirty deep, cover some miles, and have their wants supplied by ambulatory salesmen, who wend their way through every accessible passage. Of this vast population some dwell in decorated river boats used for every purpose of license and festivity—for theatres—for concerts—for feasts—for gambling—for lust—for solitary and social recreations: some craft are em-

ployed in conveying goods and passengers, and are in a state of constant activity: others are moored, and their owners are engaged as servants or labourers on shore. Indeed their pursuits are probably nearly as various as those of the land population. The immense variety of boats which are found in Chinese waters has never been adequately described. Some are of enormous size, and are used as magazines for salt or rice—others have all domestic accommodations, and are employed for the transfer of whole families, with all their domestic attendants and accommodations, from one place to another,—some, called *centipedes*, from their being supposed to have 100 rowers, convey with extraordinary rapidity the more valuable cargoes from the inner warehouses to the foreign shipping in the ports,—all these from the huge and cumbrous junks, which remind one of Noah's ark, and which represent the rude and course constructions of the remotest ages, to the fragile planks upon which a solitary leper hangs upon the outskirts of society—boats of every form and applied to every purpose,—exhibit an incalculable amount of population, which may be called amphibious, if not aquatic.

Not only are land and water crowded with Chinese, but many dwell on artificial islands which float upon the lakes,—islands with gardens and houses raised upon the rafters which the occupiers have bound together, and on which they cultivate what is needful for the supply of life's daily wants. They have their poultry and their vegetables for use—their flowers and their scrolls for ornament—their household gods for protection and worship.

In all parts of China to which we have access, we find not only that every foot of ground is cultivated which is capable of producing anything, but that, from the value of land and the surplus of labour, cultivation is rather that of gardeners than of husbandmen. The sides of hills in their natural declivity often unavailable, are, by a succession of artificial terraces, turned to profitable account. Every little bit of soil, though it be only a few feet in length and breadth, is turned to account; and not only is the surface of the land thus cared for, but every device is employed for the gathering together of every article that can serve for manure. Scavengers are constantly clearing the streets of the stercoraceous filth—the cloacæ are farmed by speculators in human ordures—the most populous places are often made offensive by the means taken to prevent the precious deposits from being lost. The fields in China have almost always large earthenware vessels for the reception of the contributions of the peasant or the traveller. You cannot enter any of their great cities without meeting multitudes of men, women, and children conveying liquid manure into the fields and gardens around. The stimulants to production are applied with most untiring industry. In this colony of Hongkong, I scarcely ever ride out without finding some little bit of ground either newly cultivated or clearing for cultivation.

Attention to the soil—not only to make it productive, but as much productive as possible—is inculcated as a political and social duty. One of the most admired sages of China (Yung-chin) says,—“Let there be no uncultivated spot in the country—no unemployed person in the city;” and the 4th maxim of the sacred Edict of Kang-hi, which is required to be read through the empire, on the 1st

and 15th day of every moon, in the presence of all the officers of state, is to the following effect: "Let husbandry occupy the principal place, and the culture of the mulberry tree, so that there may be sufficient supply of food and clothing." Shin Nung, the name of one of the most ancient and honoured of the Chinese Emperors, means "the divine Husbandman."

The arts of draining and irrigating—of preserving, preparing, and applying manure in a great variety of shapes—of fertilizing seeds—indeed all the details of Chinese agriculture—are well deserving of note, and all display evidence of the inadequate proportion which the produce of the soil bears to the demands for the consumption of the people.\*

The Chinese, again, have no prejudice whatever as regards food: they eat anything and every thing from which they can derive nutrition. Dogs, especially puppies, are habitually sold for food: and I have seen in the butchers' shops, large dogs skinned and hanging with their viscera by the side of pigs and goats. Even to rats and mice the Chinese have no objection,—neither to the flesh of monkeys and snakes: the sea slug is an aristocratical and costly delicacy which is never wanting, any more than the edible birds' nests, at a feast where honour is intended to be done to the guests. Unhatched ducks and chickens are a favourite dish. Nor do the early stages of putrefaction create any disgust: rotten eggs are by no means condemned to perdition; fish is the more acceptable when it has a strong fragrance and flavor to give more gusto to the rice.

As the food the Chinese eat is for the most part hard, coarse, and of little cost, so their beverages are singularly economical. Drunkenness is a rare vice in China, and fermented spirits or strong drinks are seldom used. Tea may be said to be the national, the universal beverage; and though that employed by the multitude does not cost more than from 3*d.* to 6*d.* per lb., an infusion of less costly leaves is commonly employed, especially in localities remote from the Tea districts. Both in eating and drinking the Chinese are temperate, and are satisfied with two daily meals—"the morning rice" at about 10 A.M., and "the evening rice" at 5 P.M. The only repugnance I have observed in China is to the use of *milk*—an extraordinary prejudice, especially considering the Tartar influences which have been long dominant in the land; but I never saw or heard of butter, cream, milk, or whey, being introduced at any native Chinese table.

While so many elements of vitality are in a state of activity for the reproduction and sustenance of the human race, there is probably no part of the world in which the harvests of mortality are more sweeping and destructive than in China, producing voids which require no ordinary appliances to fill up. Multitudes perish absolutely from want of the means of existence—inundations destroy towns and villages and all their inhabitants; it would not be easy to calculate the loss of life by the typhoons or hurricanes which visit the coasts of China, in which boats and junks are sometimes sacrificed by hundreds and by thousands. The late civil wars in China must have led to the loss of millions of lives. The sacrifices of human beings by

\* See a valuable paper on Chinese Agriculture in the Chinese Repository, vol. iii, pp. 121-27.



executions alone are frightful. At the moment in which I write, it is believed that from 400 to 500 victims fall daily by the hands of the headsman in the province of Kwang-tung alone. Reverence for life there is none, as life exists in superfluous abundance. A dead body is an object of so little concern, that it is sometimes not thought worth while to remove it from the spot where it putrefies on the surface of the earth. Often have I seen a corpse under the table of gamblers—often have I trod over a putrid body at the threshold of a door. In many parts of China there are towers of brick or stone where toothless—principally female—children are thrown by their parents into a hole made in the side of the wall. There are various opinions as to the extent of infanticide in China, but that it is a common practice in many provinces admits of no doubt. One of the most eloquent Chinese writers against infanticide, Kwei Chung Fu, professes to have been specially inspired by “the God of literature” to call upon the Chinese people to refrain from the inhuman practice, and declares that “the God” had filled his house with honours, and given him literary descendants, as the recompense for his exertions. Yet his denunciations scarcely go further than to pronounce it wicked in those to destroy their female children who have the means of bringing them up; and some of his arguments are strange enough: “To destroy daughters,” he says, “is to make war upon heaven’s harmony” (in the equal numbers of the sexes): “the more daughters you drown, the more daughters you will have; and never was it known that the drowning of daughters led to the birth of sons.” He recommends abandoning children to their fate “on the wayside” as preferable to drowning them, and then says “there are instances of children so exposed having been nursed and reared by tigers.” “Where should we have been,” he asks, “if our grandmothers and mothers had been drowned in their infancy?” And he quotes two instances of the punishment of mothers who had destroyed their infants, one of whom had a blood-red serpent fastened to her thigh, and the other her four extremities turned into cow’s feet.\* Father

\* Doubt has been sometimes expressed as to the practice of Infanticide in China on any great scale; but abundance of evidence of the extent of the usage may be found in Chinese books. The following is a translation of a Decree of the Emperor Kanghi, entitled,—

“*Edict prohibiting the drowning of Children.*”—“When a mother mercilessly plunges beneath the water the tender offspring to which she has given birth, can it be said that it owes its life to her who thus takes away what it has just begun to enjoy? The poverty of the parents is the cause of this wrongdoing; they have difficulty in earning subsistence for themselves, still less can they pay nurses and undertake all the necessary expenses for their children; thus driven to despair, and unwilling to cause the death of two persons to preserve the life of one, it comes to pass that a mother to save her husband’s life consents to destroy her children. Their natural tenderness suffers; but they at length determine to take this part, thinking themselves at liberty to dispose of the life of their children, in order to prolong their own. If they exposed these children in some unfrequented spot, their cries would move the hearts of the parents: what then do they? They cast the unfortunate babe into the current of a river, that they may at once lose sight of it, and in an instant deprive it of life. You have given me the name of Father of the People: though I cannot feel for these infants the tenderness of the parents to whom they owe their being, I cannot refrain from declaring to you, with the most painful feelings, that I absolutely forbid such homicides. The tiger, says one of our books, though it be a tiger, does not rend its own young; towards them it has a feeling breast, and continually cares for them. Poor as you may be, is it possible that you

Ripa mentions, that of abandoned children, the Jesuits baptized in Peking alone not less than three thousand yearly. I have seen ponds which are the habitual receptacle of female infants, whose bodies lie floating about on their surface.

It is by no means unusual to carry persons in a state of exhaustion a little distance from the cities, to give them a pot of rice, and to leave them to perish of starvation when the little store is exhausted. Life and death in China, beyond any other region, seem in a state of perpetual activity. The habits of the people—their traditions—the teachings of the sages—all give a wonderful impulse to the procreative affections. A childless person is deemed an unhappy, not to say a degraded, man. The Chinese moralists set it down as a law, that if a wife give no children to her husband, she is bound by every tie of duty to encourage and to patronize a concubine through whom his name may be preserved, and provision made that when he leaves the world honours will be done to his manes. One of the most popular of Chinese writers says, “There are in the world wives who, never having borne boys nor nourished girls, even when the husband has reached the age of forty, prohibit his bringing home a concubine or entertaining a handmaid for the purpose of continuing his posterity—they look upon such a person with jealous hatred and malignant ill-will. Alas! do you not know how fleet is time! Stretch as you may your months and your years, they fly like arrows; and when your husband’s animal spirits and vigorous blood shall be exhausted,—then indeed he can never beget children, and you, his wife, will have stopped the ancestral sacrifices, and you will have cut off his generation—then repentance, though you may exhibit it in a hundred ways, will indeed come too late—his mortal body will die—his property, which you, husband and wife, have sought to keep together, will not descend to his children, but be fought for by multitudes of kindred and relations; and you will have injured not one person—not your husband only—but even yourself; for who shall take charge of *your* coffin and *your* tomb? who shall bury you or offer sacrifices? Alas! your orphaned spirit shall pass nights in tears. It is sorrowful to think of. There are some wives who *do* control their jealousies, and allow their husbands to take concubines to themselves; but they do so (ungenerously) as if they were drinking vinegar, and eating acids—they beat Betty by way of scolding Belinda\*—there is no peace in the inner house. But I beseech you to act as a prudent and virtuous woman. If you have no children, provide with openness and honesty a concubine† for your husband. If she bear him children, to you he will owe that the arteries and veins of his ancestral line are continued—*his* children will honour you as *their* mother, and will not this comfort you? Give not way to the malignant jealousy of a wicked woman! Prepare not a bitterness which you yourself must swallow.”‡

Generally, however, the wife willingly coincides with the husband

should become the murderers of your own children? It is to show yourselves more unnatural than the very beasts of prey.”—*Lettres Edifiantes*, vol. xix, pp. 101-2.

\* *Chang* for *Lee*, i.e., they punish the concubine’s servants to be revenged on the concubine.

† *Gencsis* xxx, 1-13.

‡ From the Perfect Collection of Household Gems,

in introducing into the household any number of concubines whom he is able to maintain—since she exercises over them an undoubted authority, and the child of a concubine is bound to pay higher respect to the first wife than to its own mother. The Chinese illustrate all the domestic relations by imagery, and are wont to say, that as the husband is the sun, and the wife the moon, so the concubines are the planets and the stars of the domestic firmament.

And it has been often truly observed, that though the Chinese may be called sensualists, there is no deification of the grosser sensualities such as is found in the classical pantheons, and in many of the oriental forms of faith. Tales of the amours of their gods and heroes seldom figure in their historical books or traditional legends. The dresses and external habits of the women in China are invariably modest, and on the whole the social arrangements must be considered friendly to an augmentation of the human race. The domestic affections are strong. Parents are generally fond and proud of their children, and children obedient to their parents. Order is indeed the first law of Confucius—authority and submission the apex and the basis of the social pyramid.

The sentiment of dishonour attached to the extinction of a race by the want of descendants through whom the whole line of reverential services (which some have called religious worship) rendered to ancestors, is to be perpetual, is by no means confined to the privileged classes in China. One of our female servants—a nominal Christian—expressed her earnest desire that her husband should have another wife in her absence, and seemed quite surprised that any one should suppose such an arrangement to be in any respect improper.

The marriage of children is one of the great concerns of families. Scarcely is a child born in the higher ranks of life ere the question of its future espousal becomes a frequent topic of discussion. There is a large body of professional match-makers, whose business it is to put all the preliminary arrangements in train, to settle questions of dowry, to accommodate differences, to report on the *pros* and *cons* of suggested alliances. There being no hereditary honours in China—except those which reckon upwards from the distinguished son to the father, the grandfather, and the whole line of ancestry, which may be ennobled by the literary or martial genius of a descendant—the distinctions of caste are unknown, and a successful student even of the lowest origin would be deemed a fit match for the most opulent and distinguished female in the community. The severe laws which prohibit marriages within certain degrees of affinity (they do not, however, interdict it with a deceased wife's sister) tend to make marriages more prolific, and to produce a healthier race of children. So strong is the objection to the marriage of blood relations, that a man and woman of the same *Sing* or family name cannot lawfully wed.

Soldiers and sailors are in no respect prevented from marrying. I expect there is—from the number of male emigrants—from the greater loss of men by the various accidents of life—and their abstraction in many circumstances from intercourse with women—a great disproportion between the sexes, tending naturally enough to the lower appreciation of woman; but correct statistics are wanting in this, as indeed in every other part of the field of inquiry.

The proportion of unmarried to married people is (as would be deduced from the foregoing observations) exceedingly small. To promote marriages seems everybody's affair. Matches and betrothals naturally enough occupy the attention of the young, but not less that of the middle-aged and the old. A marriage is the great event in the life of man or woman, and in China is associated with more of preliminary negotiations, ceremonials at different steps of the negotiations, written correspondence, visitings, protocols, and conventions, than in any other part of the world.

I am in hopes that we may be able to obtain the vital statistics of some given district, from which more accurate results might be deduced than are afforded by any existing *data*. I keep this object in view.—I have the honour to be, sir, yours very faithfully,

JOHN BOWRING.

TO GEO. GRAHAM, Esq.,  
Registrar-General, &c., &c.,  
London.

TABLE I.

Reign of Monarch.	A.D.	Population.	
1 Hungwu ..... 26th Year,	1393,	60,545,811	} Mirror of History,— <i>Chinese Repository</i> , vol. x, page 156.
2 Hungchi ..... 4th „	1492,	53,281,158	
3 Wanleih ..... 6th „	1579,	60,692,856	
4 Shunchi ..... 18th „	1662,	21,068,600	} General Statistics of the Empire,— <i>Medhurst's China</i> , page 53.
5 Kanghi ..... 6th „	1668,	25,386,209	
6 „ ..... 49th „	1710,	23,312,200	
7 „ ..... 49th „	1710,	27,241,129	} Yih-tung Chi, a Statistical work,— <i>Morrison's View of China</i> .
8 „ ..... 50th „	1711,	28,605,746	
9 Kienlung..... 1st „	1736,	125,046,245	
10 „ ..... 8th „	1743,	157,343,975	} <i>Mémoires sur les Chinois</i> , tom. vi,—quoted by Grosier, and by De Guignes: <i>Voyages à Peking</i> , tom. iii, page 72.
11 „ ..... 8th „	1743,	149,332,730	
12 „ ..... 8th „	1743,	150,265,475	
13 „ ..... 18th „	1753,	103,050,060	} “ <i>Les Missionnaires</i> ,” De Guignes, tom. iii, page 67.
14 „ ..... 25th „	1760,	143,125,225	
15 „ ..... 25th „	1760,	203,916,477	
16 „ ..... 26th „	1761,	205,293,053	} General Statistics,— <i>Chinese Repository</i> , vol. i, page 359.
17 „ ..... 27th „	1762,	198,614,553	
18 „ ..... 55th „	1790,	155,249,897	
19 „ ..... 57th „	1792,	307,467,200	} Yih-tungchi, a Statistical work,— <i>Morrison's View of China</i> .
20 „ ..... 57th „	1792,	333,000,000	
21 Kiaking ..... 17th „	1812,	362,447,183	

*Mémoires sur les Chinois*, tom. vi,—De Guignes, tom. iii, page 72.

*Alterstain : Grosier : De Guignes*: tom. iii, page 57.

Z. of Berlin, in *Chinese Repository*, vol. i, page 361.

General Statistics,—Dr. Morrison, *Anglo-China: Col: Report*, 1829.

Statement made to Lord Macartney—Statistics,—*Chinese Repository*, vol. i, page 359.

TABLE II.

Table of the different Censuses of the Eighteen Provinces

PROVINCES.	Area in English Square Miles.	Average Population to a Square Mile, according to last Census.	Census in 1710 or before.	Census of 1711.	Census of 1743.	Census of 1753.	Census of 1762, 1765.	Census of 1792 (Macartney).	Last Census of 1812.	Revenue in Taels of \$1.33 each.
Chihli.....	58,949	475	3,260,075	3,274,870	16,702,765	9,374,217	15,222,940	38,000,000	27,990,871	3,942,000
Shantung.....	65,104	444	....	2,278,595	12,159,680	12,769,372	25,180,734	24,000,000	28,958,764	6,344,000
Shansi.....	55,268	252	1,792,329	1,727,144	8,969,475	5,162,351	9,768,189	27,000,000	14,004,210	6,313,000
Honan.....	65,104	420	2,005,088	3,094,150	12,637,280	7,114,346	16,332,507	25,000,000	23,037,171	5,651,000
Kiangsu.....	44,500	850	3,917,707	2,656,465	26,766,365	12,618,987	23,161,409	32,000,000	37,843,501	11,733,000
Nganhwui.....	48,461	705	1,350,131	1,357,829	6,681,350	12,435,361	22,761,030	19,000,000	34,168,059	3,744,000
Kiangsi.....	72,176	320	5,528,499	2,172,587	15,623,990	5,055,251	11,006,640	21,000,000	23,046,999	5,856,000
Chekiang.....	39,150	671	2,710,649	2,710,312	15,623,990	8,662,808	15,429,690	15,000,000	26,256,784	2,344,000
Fukien.....	53,480	276	1,468,145	706,311	7,643,035	4,710,399	8,063,671	15,000,000	14,777,410	2,091,000
Hupeh.....	70,450	389	469,927	433,943	4,264,850	4,568,860	8,080,603	14,000,000	27,370,098	1,905,000
Hunan.....	74,320	251	375,782	335,034	4,264,850	4,336,332	8,829,320	13,000,000	18,652,507	3,042,000
Shensi.....	67,400	153	240,809	2,150,696	14,804,085	3,851,043	7,287,443	18,000,000	10,207,256	563,000
Kansuh.....	86,608	175	311,972	368,525	15,181,710	2,133,222	7,812,014	12,000,000	15,193,125	968,000
Szechuen.....	166,800	128	144,154	3,802,689	6,006,600	1,368,496	2,782,976	21,000,000	21,435,678	2,193,000
Kwangtung.....	79,456	241	1,148,918	1,142,747	1,143,450	3,969,248	6,797,597	27,000,000	19,174,030	794,000
Kwangse.....	78,250	93	205,995	210,674	1,143,450	1,975,619	3,947,414	10,000,000	7,313,895	185,000
Kweichau.....	64,554	82	51,089	37,731	255,445	1,718,848	3,402,722	9,000,000	5,288,219	432,000
Yunnan.....	107,969	51	2,255,666	145,444	1,189,825	1,003,058	2,078,802	8,000,000	5,561,320	....
Shingking.....	....	....	4,194	....	235,620	221,742	668,852	....	2,167,286	....
	1,297,999	268	27,241,129	28,605,746	150,265,475	103,050,060	198,614,553	333,000,000	362,447,183	58,100,000

CANTON, 29th June, 1855.

DEAR SIR,—In respect to the question of the population of China, I have nothing new of any general application to the subject. It would be a good service to the statistics of the race, for Hienfung to make out a general census, as his grandfather did, now forty-three years after the last.

The visits made to villages and towns in this prefecture since the breaking out of disturbances last June, have strengthened rather than diminished one's faith in the accuracy of the census. Large towns, like Shihlung, Kiúkiáng, Kinchub, Fuhshán, Sintsion, and others, have been found to contain even larger numbers than the representations of the Chinese had led one to believe. Fuhshán occupies even more ground than Canton, rather than less; and several observers agreed in estimating the portion which was burned last autumn as large as the entire western suburbs of Canton. Sintsion is estimated at half a million, though data are wanted to confirm this figure. You will see a list of villages enumerated by Mr. Bonney, in the "Anglo-Chinese Calendars for 1852 and 1853," all of which were situated within a radius of two miles of Whampoa, or on Fa-té island, west of Macao passage. Few spots in the world maintain a denser population than the delta of Pearl River, nearly all of which is included in the prefecture of Kwángshan, which is about one-ninth of the whole province. Its density of population doubtless is greater than any other equal area in the whole province; for if the whole contained as many, the entire amount could hardly be less than thirty millions instead of nineteen millions as now reckoned.

The Registrar-General must needs be content with an approximate estimate, from the nature of the case, our inability to make minute personal examination, and the lapse of time since the last general census. Huc, I see, estimates the combined population of Wúcháng, Hányáng, and Hánkau in Húpeh, at the high figure of eight millions, if I remember aright, for I have not the book to refer to; this is more than I have seen any one else reckon it. He gives one the impression of a highly cultivated and well-peopled region in Eastern Sz'chuen, too, and through the valley of the Yángtsz' in Húpeh. I have no special data to add to these general remarks on this subject; but if I could put as much credence in Chinese historical and political statements as I do in their statistical, I should think much more of their value. It is a melancholy reflection to think that so vast a portion of our race is almost entirely ignorant of God and his truth. Most truly yours,

S. W. WILLIAMS.

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